

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

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ACDA-05 TRSE-00 SAJ-01 /063 W
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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9255

INFO USMISSION NATO

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, EC, FR

SUBJECT:THE LAST V-E DAY CEREMONY FOR FRANCE

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: Giscard has announced that France

will no longer celebrate V-E Day. He has proposed

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CREATION OF "FOUNDATION OF EUROPE" ANNIVERSARY INSTEAD.

GIVEN WELCOME THAT WE EXPECT THIS IDEA WILL RECEIVE IN FRG, WE BELIEVE GISCARD INITIATIVE CAN BE CONSTRUCTIVE, BUT THE SUGGESTION IS SOMETHING FOR EUROPEANS TO DECIDE. END SUMMARY.

2. PRESIDENT GISCARD ANNOUNCED MAY 8 THAT THIS YEAR'S OFFICIAL V-E DAY CELEBRATION IN FRANCE WOULD BE THE LAST. IN A LETTER TO THE OTHER HEADS OF GOVERNMENT OF THE EC-NINE, HE SUGGESTED THAT IT WOULD BE MORE APPROPRIATE FOR THE NINE TO CHOOSE A COMMON DATE TO MARK THE FOUNDATION OF EUROPE HIS LETTER ADDED THAT IT IS TIME TO OPEN THE WAY TO THE FUTURE AND TOGETHER TO TURN EUROPE'S THOUGHTS TOWARD WHAT UNITES EUROPE.

3. ASKED TO COMMENT ON GISCARD'S PROPOSAL, FRG AMBASSADOR TO FRANCE VON BRAUN SAID THAT GISCARD'S INITIATIVE REPRESENTS A NEW STEP IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF EUROPE AND THAT HE WAS CERTAIN THAT THE FRENCH INITIATIVE WOULD RECEIVE THE BEST RECEPTION FROM BONN.

4. WHEN ASKED FOR OUR REACTION TO GISCARD'S ANNOUNCEMENT, EMBASSY PRESS SPOKESMAN SAID THAT THE FRENCH ARE OBVIOUSLY THE ONLY JUDGES OF WHICH HISTORICAL OCCASIONS THEY WANT TO CELEBRATE BUT THAT EVERYONE, NO MATTER WHERE, WILL REACT FAVORABLY TO ANY MOVE THAT CONTRIBUTES TO THE CAUSE OF PEACE AND BETTER RELATIONS AMONG COUNTRIES. WE DO NOT INTEND TO EXPAND ON THIS STATEMENT.

5. COMMENT: GISCARD'S MOVE SEEMS TO BE SHREWDLY TIMED TO ENHANCE HIS STATURE BOTH DOMESTICALLY AND INTERNATIONALLY. FROM A DOMESTIC POINT OF VIEW, WE EXPECT THAT MOST CONSERVATIVE AND MODERATE ELEMENTS, EXCEPT THE ULTRA-NATIONALISTS AND SOME VETERANS' GROUPS, WILL WELCOME GISCARD'S INITIATIVE BECAUSE IT PLACES EMPHASIS ON THE CONSTRUCTIVE IDEA OF EUROPEAN UNION WHILE ABANDONING THE SOMEWHAT UNCOMFORTABLE ANTI-GERMAN OVERTONES THAT HAVE -- QUITE NATURALLY -- PLAYED A ROLE IN PREVIOUS V-E DAY CELEBRATIONS IN FRANCE. WE EXPECT THAT THE LOUDEST OPPOSITION TO GISCARD'S IDEA WILL COME FROM LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THE FRENCH COMMUNIST PARTY, WHICH IS LIKELY TO SEE IN THE LOSS OF FUTURE MAY 8 V-E DAY CELEBRATIONS THE CONSEQUENT LOSS OF AN OFFICIALLY APPROVED OPPORTUNITY TO NURTURE AN ANTI-FRG ATMOSPHERE. (HUMANITE HAS ALREADY LABELED THE PROPOSAL AN "OUTRAGE.") THE PCF IS LIKELY TO BE PLACED IN THE DIFFICULT POSITION OF DEFENDING FUTURE V-E DAY CELEBRATIONS IN FRANCE ON LARGEMLY NEGATIVE GROUNDS OF KEEPING FRENCH PEOPLE SENSITIVE TO EVILS OF

PAST GERMAN PERFORMANCE, AN ARGUMENT THAT HAS DECREASING APPEAL TO MANY FRENCHMEN. MOREOVER, FRG HAS LONG BEEN UNHAPPY WITH WHAT IT REGARDS AS SUPER-ABUNDANCE OF ANTI-GERMAN MEDIA PRODUCTIONS IN FRANCE. WE UNDERSTAND THAT SCHEEL REGISTERED THIS COMPLAINT WITH SOME VIGOR TO GISCARD DURING HIS RECENT VISIT TO PARIS.

6. AS SUGGESTED BY AMBASSADOR VON BRAUN'S COMMENTS MENTIONED IN PARA 3 ABOVE, GISCARD'S INITIATIVE IN ABANDONING FUTURE V-E DAY CELEBRATIONS SHOULD BE SEEN BY THE FRG AS POSITIVE EVIDENCE OF GISCARD'S DESIRE TO TURN FRANCE FURTHER AWAY FROM PREOCCUPATION WITH THOSE MEMORIES THAT DIVIDE FRANCE AND GERMANY, AND TOWARD THE

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VISION OF A UNITED EUROPE -- A GOAL THAT REPRESENTS THE MOST NOBLE ASPIRATIONS OF BONN AND PARIS AS WELL AS ALL OF WESTERN EUROPE AND THAT MUST REST ON A SOLID PARIS-BONN FOUNDATION.

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. FINALLY, THIS IS ONE MORE PIECE OF EVIDENCE THAT OBSERVERS CAN CITE TO SUPPORT THE CONTENTION THAT Giscard IS A TRUE BELIEVER IN EUROPEAN UNION. COINCIDENTALLY, IT MAY ALSO SERVE MORE PAROCHIAL FRENCH INTERESTS BY PRESENTING THE MAY 9 ANNIVERSARY OF THE FRENCH-SPONSORED SCHUMAN PLAN (WHICH IS CURRENTLY RECEIVING MAJOR ATTENTION IN FRANCE ON ITS 25TH ANNIVERSARY) AS THE MOST LOGICAL CANDIDATE FOR THE EC-NINE-WIDE "FOUNDATION OF EUROPE" DAY. FURTHERMORE, THIS MOST RECENT EVIDENCE OF Giscard'S "EUROPEANISM" MAY HAVE SOME RELEVANCE TO BELGIAN PREMIER TINDEMANS' VISIT TO PARIS MAY 9 WHICH WE EXPECT WILL FOCUS ON Giscard'S ATTEMPT TO CONVINCE TINDEMANS TO BUY THE MIRAGE F-1E AND TO MOVE EUROPE TOWARD UNITY THROUGH SUPPORT FOR THE "EUROPEAN AIRCRAFT INDUSTRY" (I.E., DASSAULT).

8. ON BALANCE, SEEN FROM PARIS, WE BELIEVE THAT Giscard'S PROPOSAL IS CONSTRUCTIVE. THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF V-E DAY HAS BEEN PARTICULARLY NOTEWORTHY TO FRENCH BECAUSE OF

-- EMBARRASSMENT CAUSED TO GOF BY EXUBERANT WARSAW PACT CELEBRATIONS THAT CARRIED DISTINCT ANTI-FRG OVERTONES,

-- PARTICIPATION FOR FIRST TIME BY FRG AMBASSADOR IN MAY 8 CEREMONIES AT ARC DE TRIOMPHE, AND

-- GENERAL VIEW THAT FRG HAS OBSERVED IN FEDERAL REPUBLIC FOR THE FIRST TIME THIS YEAR V-E DAY IN A "NORMAL" WAY.

9. NOW GISCARD PROBABLY WANTS TO SEPARATE FRANCE FROM FUTURE POLEMICS OF PAST V-E DAY CELEBRATIONS, AND EASE THE ANGUISH THAT V-E DAY MUST CREATE FOR MANY WEST GERMANS, NO MATTER HOW STIFF THEIR UPPER LIP APPEARS. BOTH GOALS WOULD BE CONSISTENT WITH USG ATTITUDES TOWARD EUROPE. WE RECOMMEND THAT WASHINGTON -- AND OTHER POSTS -- FOLLOW THE SAME GENERAL PRESS LINE DESCRIBED IN PARA 4 ABOVE: ACKNOWLEDGE THAT GISCARD'S PROPOSAL IS A LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MATTER FOR THE FRENCH AND THE EUROPEANS TO DECIDE, BUT THAT WE WELCOME ANY MOVE THAT CONTRIBUTES TO BRINGING NATIONS TOGETHER RATHER THAN PERPETUATING THEIR DIFFERENCES.

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